**IT Applications, Unit 4**

**Chapter 6: User documentation, p 226**

**Onscreen user documentation:**

1. **What is the nature of onscreen user documentation?**

On screen user documentation is information to provide guidance to users and is designed to be viewed on the screen of a computer or other electronic device. On screen user documentation explains how to use a product or how to perform a procedure with the product. The information has to be clear and logical and can be presented in the form of text, graphics, video or hypertext.

1. **List the 3 functions of onscreen user documentation?**

* A user may refer to onscreen user documentation for instructions on assessing and using features of new programs or devices, or for instructions on using product features with which they are unfamiliar.
* A user in a workplace may refer to in-house onscreen user documentation for information on company procedures and policies for their information system.
* If a problem occurs while using a product, the user may refer to a help file of on screen user documentation to find a solution.

**Types of onscreen user documentation:**

**Describe the characteristics of the following types of onscreen user documentation.**

1. **User guides and instruction manuals**
   1. **What is the purpose of these guides?**

The purpose of these guides is to inform and instruct the user about the characteristics, capabilities and functions of the hardware or software. They will detail how to start of using the product for the first time, how to perform actions and tasks and also the security warnings and guidelines for the safe operation of the product.

* 1. **What are the two popular formats for onscreen user guides? Why?**

The two most popular formats for onscreen user guides and instruction manuals are PDF (Portable Document Format) and Hypertext (browser based). They are the most popular because both of these formats:

* Allow text and graphics
* Are small in file size
* Can be accessed on various platforms or operating systems
* Can be viewed as read only files
* Can be printed out (so that the user can print out one section rather than the whole manual.
  1. **What is a third party user guide?**

Third party user guides and instruction manuals are available for many products in addition to the manufacturer’s own user guide. They are often published as books.

1. **Quick start guides**

Onscreen quick start guides are provided with an application or device for first time or inexperienced users of the product. They give brief simple instructions on how to begin using the device and how to do common task on the device.

1. **In-house user documentation**

Some organisations produce in house user documentation. These user guides allow the employees or clients of the organisation to use the information system. The many include in house protocols such as file naming and storing protocols, security procedures and email protocols. These may be used within programs such as Excel and Filemaker Pro. These may be in the form of PDF or Hypertext.

1. **Read me files**

Read me files are provided by the manufacturer with hardware and software. They contain important information for users such as configuration settings, system requirements, troubleshooting requirements and web support addresses. Read Me files can also contain late-breaking news about the product. This is information that is updated as late as possible just prior to the release of the product.

1. **Tutorials**

A tutorial consists of step by step instructions for performing tasks and for using features and functions of the software program or hardware device. Tutorials can include text and images and most times consist of screen shots to visually represent the steps; this can also be done by video and audio. Help files may include some tutorial based instructions. Some tutorials are CD or DVD based and some can be featured on the company’s website or on individual websites.

1. **Help files**

Help files provide searchable information about the functions and features of the application. They can include extensive files of short brief overviews. Help files could also include a glossary of the specialist terms used in the application or device.

1. **Web support**

User documentation for hardware and software can also be found on the web. The web based support will have section son trouble shooting, knowledge base, FAQ, patches for problems that have arisen after the program was released and how to upgrade the product. Forum based websites are also helpful and can have threads containing help questions that people can answer and seek help from.

1. **Tool tips & hint boxes**

Tool tips and hint tip boxes provide content specific help to support the user in understanding the application or device.

*Tool tips:* within a software application, holding the cursor over an icon may highlight a text box with the name or function of the icon.

*Hint Box:* clicking on an icon to display a description of the function of the icon and possibly a related graphic.